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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

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MEMORANDUM

NORWAY: A TNF UPDATE

Summary

Prime Minister Nordli's Labor government, in office since January 1976, does not appear seriously threatened in the near term by either its domestic or foreign policy problems. Nordli's support for theater nuclear force modernization is not a major domestic political issue, although he is under considerable fire for clumsy management of the Norwegian economy and Oslo's delicate relations with Moscow. Nordli is taking steps to improve the situation, however, and the right wing opposition, which lacks a parliamentary majority, is not pushing for an early confrontation with the Prime Minister. The chances of a challenge to the government will increase as the 1981 election approaches, but Nordli's opposition is likely to base its attack more on domestic economic issues than on foreign or defense policy.

This memorandum, requested by the National Security Council and the Department of State, was prepared by [] the Western Europe Division, Office of Political Analysis, and [] the European Division, Office of Central Reference. The paper has been coordinated with the Office of Economic Research, the Office of Strategic Research, and the National Intelligence Officer for Western Europe. Research was completed on 28 January 1980. Questions and comments may be addressed to the Chief, Northern Europe Branch, Western Europe Division, Office of Political Analysis []

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The Near Term for Nordli: Challenges Under Control

Nordli's minority government has been severely criticized for mis-managing the economy, fumbling relations with Moscow, and supporting NATO TNF modernization. Only the domestic economic issue poses a serious threat to the coalition, but the government does not face an immediate challenge.

The government can count on the two votes of the Left Socialist Party for its majority on most domestic issues. The Left Socialists are extremely reluctant to permit a takeover by parties to their right and as a result see little to gain from toppling the government. They have threatened to abandon Nordli only once--when a proposed agreement with the Swedish automaker Volvo reserved a significant slice of an industrial development project for private ownership. In that instance, the party was prepared to join the center-right opposition, which objected to the substantial share reserved for government ownership, to prevent completion of the deal. The deal was killed in Sweden, however, before coming to a vote in Norway.

Oslo has mishandled a series of conflicts of interest with the USSR in the northern maritime areas. The opposition has charged Nordli with mismanagement on this issue, and the media have joined in attacking the government. The government has been depicted as too susceptible to Soviet pressure and generally disorganized in its dealings with Moscow. To avoid further charges, Nordli recently reshuffled his cabinet and other appointees with the aim of improving coordination among diplomatic, commercial, and security officials dealing with Soviet affairs.

Other personnel changes Nordli made last October were designed to reduce strains between right and left wing factions within the Labor Party. Nordli deliberately placed left wing spokesmen in domestic cabinet posts; he hopes these ideologues will become pragmatists when they are forced to deal directly with problems and obliged to share responsibility for the results.

Nordli is unlikely to face a serious opposition challenge on foreign or defense policy, because his party contains the bulk of the anti-nuclear, antidefense activists and he has successfully muffled them. Other, more extreme opponents of TNF are not very numerous and will be isolated by the government's determined efforts to emphasize the arms control aspects of the 12 December NATO decision. The recent Soviet aggression in Afghanistan is likely to isolate the extremists even more, and reinforce the overwhelming Norwegian approval of NATO participation.

After 1980

If the government fails to get a majority on a major issue and resigns, the new government will be faced with the same parliament because the Norwegian constitution makes no provision for early elections. Although the right wing opposition parties worry that they would be hurt by an extended period of government responsibility--the right cannot muster a majority on most issues--they see some advantage in being the incumbent when the 1981 elections roll around. This means that, although Nordli is probably safe for 1980, there is a good chance the opposition will press its charges of economic mismanagement against the government next year.

TNF Opinion Makers

Although TNF is unlikely to pose a threat to the government, support for the modernization program is not unanimous. The Conservative, Center, and Christian Peoples Parties and a majority of the Labor Party support the government decision in favor of TNF modernization. The Socialists, Liberals, and a sizable minority in the Labor Party oppose it. The Parliament's Disarmament Committee is evenly divided on the issue. The dividing lines seem to be mainly between various internal party factions, not between parties.

The following government, parliamentary, and party leaders are likely to be instrumental in shaping Norwegian views:

Knut Frydenlund

Minister of Foreign Affairs. The pragmatic Frydenlund, who began his career as a diplomat is respected for his expertise in international affairs. A strong supporter of NATO and Norway's role in NATO, Frydenlund stresses the importance of Allied support for his country in its relations with the Soviet Union. At the same time he insists on bilateral negotiations with Moscow on sovereignty-related issues. Frydenlund believes NATO has a strong responsibility to seek relaxation of tensions with the Soviet Union and will support his government's policy giving priority to arms control negotiations.

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Thorvald Stoltenberg

Minister of Defense. Formerly under-secretary of the Foreign Ministry, Stoltenberg became Minister of Defense in October 1979. He is a leading member of the Labor Party and is known internationally for his negotiating ability through his experience at the United Nations. He has repeatedly stressed that the government's decision on production and deployment of TNF is firm, but has also insisted that strong arms control measures need to be part of the plan. His reputation as a persuasive negotiator means he will play a key role in future TNF decisions.

Reiulf Steen

Minister of Commerce and Shipping; Chairman of Labor Party. Reiulf Steen, labor leader and spokesman of the Labor Party left, was brought into the cabinet in October 1979. He is one of the most prominent ideologues in the Norwegian Labor Party, second only to Prime Minister Nordli. Steen has been reluctant to state his preference plainly. He has denied that he "wants" TNF modernization, but says he is willing to go along if NATO is committed to arms control negotiations. He continues to point to Olso's prohibition of nuclear weapons in Norway during peacetime.

General Herman Zeiner Gundersen

Chairman, NATO Military Committee. An intense, serious, extremely competent professional soldier, totally dedicated to the NATO mission, Zeiner Gundersen supported the neutron bomb, increased defense spending, and TNF modernization. He also criticized Brezhnev's unilateral force cut. Although he is expected to retire from the military in July 1980, his views will still be respected within the MOD and by Parliament. He is likely to become an expert public commentator on Norwegian military matters.

Johan Jorgen Holst

Under Secretary, MFA. Holst is Norway's foremost authority on international security and nuclear weapons deployment policy in Western Europe. Some of his considerable influence was gained during his three years (1976-79) as under secretary in the Ministry of Defense. Holst, who has advocated the need for NATO-wide resolve and solidarity on TNF, has become more of a voice for the arms limitations aspect of the 12 December decision since assuming his new position. He should have a large voice in any decision-making on TNF.

Rolf Hansen

Minister for Environmental Affairs. A long time, well-liked member of the moderate wing of the Labor Party, Rolf Hansen is noted for his outspoken, decisive manner. He is considered a strong leader, capable of making quick decisions. As Minister for Defense for three years (1976-79), he proved an efficient, organized manager. An advocate of NATO and of a strong defense, Hansen favors increased military spending. He would have more influence if he still held that post, but undoubtedly his suggestions will have some impact.

Arvid Johanson

Chairman of Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. Labor Party leader Johanson favors negotiations for force reduction by both NATO and the Soviet Bloc countries. In November 1979 he believed that balance was about to shift in favor of the Soviets, but in December he became the most prominent personality to shift his views and has now endorsed the Danish six-month delay proposal. He will have considerable influence in discussions on the issue.

Lars Korvald

Christian People's Party parliamentary Leader. Korvald has a reputation for being a hard-working, dependable public servant who listens to his advisers and has a talent as a solid negotiator. Prime Minister for 10 months (1972-73) as a compromise coalition leader, Korvald remains a potential candidate for that office again should a nonsocialist coalition be formed in the future. Korvald is favorably disposed toward the United States and supports Norway's ties to NATO and Western Europe. He sees no alternative to support for TNF modernization. He believes that if Norway wants to be a member of the Alliance, it has to share such responsibilities. The majority of the Christian People's Party will support this position.

Kaare Willoch

Conservative Party parliamentary Leader. Norway's leading nonsocialist politician, Willoch is a hard-working, intelligent, middle-of-the-roader. Very interested in foreign affairs, Willoch is unequivocally pro-West in general and pro-NATO in particular. He supports TNF because he believes the Soviets have superiority in Europe, both in nuclear and conventional weapons. He is sure to carry most of his party with him.

Hans Hammond
Rossbach

Liberal Party parliamentary Leader. Rossbach is highly skeptical of the TNF plan. He believes that Norway should not support the modernization plan without exhausting the possibilities for negotiation. He also rejects the idea of first attaining new weapons in order to use them subsequently as a negotiating chip in future relations. He will probably persuade many members of the Liberal Party to accept his interpretation on TNF.

Sissel Ronbeck

Minister of Consumer Affairs and Administration. She has been strongly critical of TNF, but is not expected to have much impact on the issue.

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Einer Forde

Minister of Church and Education. Forde has expressed strong opposition to the TNF decision, but is not likely to play a role in the debate.

Per Hysing-Dahl

Chairman of the Parliament's Defense Committee. Hysing-Dahl is one of the most knowledgeable members of Parliament and a recognized authority on defense matters. Hysing-Dahl has worked hard for a greater national military effort, increased defense spending, and closer alliance ties. Hysing-Dahl has considerable visibility by virtue of his roles as a powerful Conservative Party politician and chairman of the extremely influential Parliamentary Defense Committee. He stresses pre-stocking of military material to a greater extent than most Norwegian politicians. He says the government must make completely clear that it will support TNF, which he views as the only way to ensure a balance of forces between East and West. He should exert substantial influence in decisions relating to TNF modernization.

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